Counterpunch

A Report from the Capital

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Flacking for Terror: The Bruce Fein Case

Conservative VIP Makes Top Dollar Promoting African Extremists

Anyone who closely follows the Washington political scene is surely familiar with conservative "legal scholar" Bruce Fein. Called the "dominant force in the legal instant-analysis market" by *The Washington Post*, Fein can be seen on CNN, MacNeil/Lehrer, Good Morning America and Nightline. His views on the Supreme Court, judicial decisions and other important legal matters are eagerly sought by journalists.

Less known about Fein, a sanctimonious critic of the left's ethics, is his work on behalf of extremist African political movements. Of particular note here is Fein's lucrative career as a lobbyist for Mozambique's notorious RENAMO guerrilla army, the African equivalent of the Khmer Rouge. "Even the Reagan administration acknowledged that RENAMO was a gang of thugs," notes Steve Askin, a journalist who was long based in southern Africa. "Those people who worked for them are knowing associates of mass murder."

The rest of Fein's political and intellectual history is equally unattractive. His prominence in the capital is a sad commentary on the conservative movement he represents and on the journalists who, in uncritically promoting Fein as an important scholar, have greatly enhanced the undeserved stature of this mad "philosopher."

Fein and Conservative Ideology

A graduate of the Harvard Law School, Fein served as Associate Deputy Attorney General to Edwin Meese between 1981 and 1983. He played a key role in formulating Reagan administration policy on school prayer, abortion, and crime, and backed the failed bid to grant tax-exempt status to the openly racist Bob Jones University. Since leaving government, Fein has been affiliated with the Heritage Foundation and the American Enterprise Institute. He has published the "Selected Writings of Bruce Fein" and co-authored the 1987 classic, "Nicaragua's constitution: echoes of Mein Kampf."

Fein's lunatic views are well reflected in a 1993 article he wrote for *The Recorder*, a legal journal, in which he attacked a Miami court for granting the homeless the right to sleep in public parks. The judge so ruled because he deemed the plight of the homeless to be "involuntary."

Fein argued to the contrary, writing that in the vast majority of cases the "mean circumstances" of the homeless were "the natural consequences of earlier free choices," such as preferring "indolence to exertion, sensual gratification to abstemiousness." If the Court's decision was allowed to stand, wrote Fein, "it would seem difficult to deny the poor, indolent and uneducated a moral and constitutional right to a minimum level of government subsidy from those who work and pay taxes."

The basis for Fein's core thesis—that the homeless "have chosen their fates through the exercise of free will"—was his observation that many people are able to escape poverty "by dint of self-discipline and hard work." That is equivalent to saying that drunk driving is perfectly safe because many people drink and drive without having an accident.

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Shorts/Updates

The liberal media, indeed. Sixty-nine percent of journalists surveyed in a recent *Times Mirror* poll would support the use of U.S. troops to repel a North Korean attack on South Korea. Amongst the general public, support for troop deployment was just 31 percent.

The views expressed at "The Media and Foreign Policy in the Post-Cold War World," a 1993 debate among top journalists held at Columbia University, also reveal the accommodating nature of the watchdog press. Critical thought on the panel was at a level one would expect to find in a team of North Korean writers preparing a special report on Glorious Comrade Kim il Sung's renewed call for increased tractor production.

A few gems gleaned from the transcript: former ABC News Bonn bureau chief Kati Marton said that with the end of the Cold War, coverage has "become incredibly complicated. The marvelous simplicity of good guys vs. bad guys is over." Media "critic" John Vanden Heuvel asserted that "there's a deep-seated notion in the American mentality that we have a special beneficent role to play in the world. Perhaps foreign policy and humanitarianism have become somewhat synonymous." Robert MacNeil of the MacNeil/Lehrer NewsHour endorsed the *Queen Mary* approach to foreign news, saying "the president is like the chief passenger on the cruise ship. When he goes to the rail and points at something, that's interesting for the rest of the passengers."

Most amazing was Vanden Heuvel's conclusion, reached after considering the panelists' views: the future was bright, he said, thanks to "the American media's deeply rooted tradition of independent-mindedness."

***Counter*punch** continues to receive disturbing information on Cold War-era radiation experiments. A newly declassified Army memo from June 27, 1951 discusses plans for that year's "Buster/Jangle" operation, in which thousands of troops were exposed to radioactive fallout when "moved into the burst area" immediately following atomic blasts.

The purpose of the operation was explained by the memo's author, Dr. Richard Meiling, then Chairman of the Armed Forces Medical Policy Council. "Fear of radiation is almost universal among the uninitiated and unless it is overcome in the military forces it could present a most serious problem if atomic weapons are used for tactical or strategic purposes," warned the M.D. "The dispelling of this fear is considered to be of urgent priority."

Meiling insisted that Buster/Jangle participants would run no health risks because "persistent ionizing radiation following air bursts does not occur, hence the fear that it presents a dangerous hazard to personnel is groundless."

Did military officials and scientists actually believe that radiation testing was wholly benign, as many now claim? A second memo, sent by a military official to the Atomic Energy Commission on April 17, 1947—more than four years before the above communique—makes clear they did not. Labelled "MEDICAL EXPERIMENTS ON HUMANS," the brief note begins: "It is desired that no document be released which refers to [radiation] experiments with humans and might have adverse effect on public opinion or result in legal suits. Documents covering such work...should be classified 'secret.'"

In the March 15 issue of ***Counter*punch**, we discussed the snug relationship between Bill Bradley and major drug manufacturers, many of whom are based in the New Jersey Senator's home state. The article detailed how Bradley last year helped preserve most benefits contained in Section 936 of the Internal Revenue Code, a corporate welfare program which gives drug firms huge tax breaks on profits earned by their Puerto Rican subsidiaries. Bradley and the drug lords argue that the tax break creates jobs for Puerto Rico's workers, and should be maintained for their benefit.

After coming across a copy of our story, a source familiar with a major New Jersey-based drug manufacturer's accounting procedures contacted ***Counter*punch** with an alternative explanation for the tax break's appeal to the drug lobby. According to the source, the company—which must remain unnamed for obvious reasons—successfully evades paying millions of dollars in taxes around the globe by falsely attributing virtually all worldwide profits to its Puerto Rican operations. This is achieved through the use of bogus "transfer prices"—the prices charged on inter-firm transactions between company subsidiaries.

For example, profits made in France, where taxes are high, miraculously disappear when the French subsidiary sells its products at *below-cost* prices to the firm's Puerto Rican subsidiary. The Puerto Rican subsidiary then racks up enormous, largely tax-free profits by reselling the merchandise to outside buyers at market rates.

The company provides these doctored figures to tax authorities, while keeping a second set of accounts—which accurately reflect its subsidiaries' profits and losses—for internal eyes only. The latter figures are used to make decisions about worldwide production, and for the crucial task of preparing bonus and incentive packages for executives.

Of course, in most parts of the world keeping two sets of books to avoid taxes is illegal. The source recalls a conversation he once had with several of the company's top European executives, who expressed fear of doing jail time if the twin accounting systems were exposed.

Keep this in mind the next time you hear the drug lobby defending Puerto Rican labor or Bradley calling for a more equitable tax system, a popular stance the Senator frequently adopts at the Senate Finance Committee. •

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Fein, from p. 1

Heart of Darkness: Fein in Africa

Created by Rhodesian intelligence agencies in the mid-1970s, RENAMO was later taken over by the South African military and used to destablilize the leftist government of Mozambique. Before signing a peace agreement 18 months ago, RENAMO troops murdered—according to the most conservative estimates—more than 100,000 civilians. The State Department's 1988 Gersony Report documented RENAMO methods such as "shooting executions, knife/axe/bayonet killings, burning alive, beating to death, forced asphyxiation, forced starvation, forced drownings and random shootings at civilians."

Scorned, at least publicly, by the Reagan administration, American support for RENAMO was limited to the looniest sectors of the anti-communist, Christian right. A partial list of key players involved reads like the cast of characters from an Oliver Stone/Christic Institute nightmare: former deputy CIA director Ray Cline, retired Gen. John Singlaub, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, Jerry Falwell, Jimmy Swaggart and Andy Eiva. A former Green Beret best known for drumming up support for the mujaheddin in Afghanistan, Eiva visited RENAMO territory in the mid-1980s and still maintains that charges of the group's human rights violations were grossly exaggerated. "The guys were great," he told ***Counterpunch*** in a phone interview. "They brought order; things were prospering."

RENAMO's chief U.S. lobbyist during the 1980s was Thomas W. Schaaf, Jr., a devout evangelical who founded the Washington-based Mozambique Research Center. Schaaf arranged for Pat Robertson's "700 Club" to film from RENAMO territory in 1986, and the following year arranged a tour for a group from *Soldier of Fortune* magazine. According to a knowledgeable source, Schaaf was later forced out of RENAMO when Afonso Dhlakama, the terrorist group's leader, learned that Schaaf had established an intimate relationship with a top guerrilla official. While part of a lifestyle that is perfectly acceptable to the staff of ***Counterpunch***, that relationship would surely have shocked Schaaf's right-wing Christian patrons.

Fein was hired by RENAMO in 1991, at a time when the group's reputation had hit rock bottom. Like most foreign lobbyists, he bilked his client for huge sums of money while performing virtually no work. Records on file with the Justice Department show that Fein's chief endeavors were writing the *Dhlakama Papers*, a collection of the wise leader's theoretical musings, and RENAMO's constitution. The latter document is a loose plagiarism of the U.S. constitution with a few of Fein's pet projects—such as the death penalty and sweeping privatization—thrown in for good measure.

Fein also obtained invitations for Dhlakama to speak to the Heritage Foundation and the Republican Study Group, invitations RENAMO's leader was unable to keep as Fein failed to obtain a visa for him to visit the U.S. "In all the years I've worked [on Mozambique], I've never met more than a few people who ever spoke to Fein," says a source on Capitol Hill.

Such ineffectual efforts to "elicit support for the democracy initiatives of RENAMO" netted Fein at least $175,000. He received roughly two-thirds of that money in July of 1991, the same month that RENAMO's major "democracy initiative" was beheading civilians while rampaging through northern Mozambique.

Human Rights Hoax: Firm of Blaustein and Fein

More recently, Fein has devoted much time to Blaustein and Fein, a Great Falls, Virginia-based firm which "specializes in advising foreign governments in drafting constitutions." His partner, Albert Blaustein, a Rutgers Law School professor emeritus, is another conservative ideologue, described as "a hustler without substance" by a source familiar with his work.

Legal lightweights with little academic prestige, Fein and Blaustein have brilliantly succeeded in marketing themselves abroad as eminent constitutional scholars. Blaustein, who travels widely, is a long-time advisor to Chief Mangosuthu Buthelezi's Inkatha Party. He also wrote the Inkatha constitution, a document which caused a huge scandal upon its publication in 1992 because it laid the foundation for a secessionist KwaZulu-Natal "state" in South Africa.

Blaustein, who has said that "advocating freedom and democracy is...America's most important business," wrote the Liberian constitution for the government of Samuel Doe, the dictator slain in 1990 after a decade of tyrannical rule. Blaustein's most cynical contribution to Liberian democracy was to include an "anti-Hitler" clause in the constitution which made it illegal for Liberians to form "extremist" political parties—a clause inserted at the personal request of dictator Doe.

Fein and Blaustein charge their clients $200 per hour and up. While flacking for "marginalized groups" such as RENAMO and Inkhata, they tout themselves as human rights defenders.

A final note: RENAMO's Dhlakama, who is running in Mozambique's October presidential election, is set to visit Washington later this month. Snubbing Fein, Dhlakama recently hired John Sassi, a Democrat and former lobbyist for Angola's leftist government, to arrange the visit. "Working with Sassi puts them at the center," says a Mozambique observer. "Remaining within Fein/Heritage Foundation-type circles would damage Dhlakama's efforts to create a 'new, improved' RENAMO." Undeterred by rejection, Fein maintains his status as a registered agent for Dhlakama at the Justice Department.

Ironically, while Fein is not embarrassed to be linked to RENAMO, RENAMO now is embarrassed to be linked to Fein. •

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China Sí, Cuba No

Last June, Bill Clinton broke a campaign pledge and renewed China's Most Favored Nation (MFN) status for one year despite its abysmal human rights record. Pres. Bill warned at the time that only "overall, significant progress" in human rights would win China a new extension in 1994.

With the deadline nearing, Beijing's human rights record is as bad as ever. Human Rights Watch records a long string of abuses, ranging from the use of executed prisoners' organs for medical transplants to the forcible detention of political dissidents in asylums for the criminally insane.

The Chinese, however, have little to fear. As with Indonesia, (see ***Counter*punch**, Feb. 15, 1994) Beijing's lure as a business partner—bilateral trade hit $33 billion last year—ensures that Clinton will huff and puff but ultimately do nothing.

China skillfully plays its business cards in protecting MFN status. Shortly before Clinton ruled on the subject last year, a Chinese trade delegation arrived in the U.S. and conspicuously ordered more than $1 billion worth of planes, cars and trucks, and oil exploration equipment. Beijing also received assistance from its major American commercial partners, including Boeing, General Electric, Weyerhauser and Motorola, who fiercely pressured the administration to maintain China's trading rights. Clinton's predictable capitulation soon followed.

The president is currently rehearsing his second MFN surrender, as seen in the following headlines from *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Wall Street Journal*. Note the trajectory in tone from last fall, when talk was cheap, to recent months, with time for action rapidly nearing:

- Oct. 1, 1993, *NYT*: U.S. Warns Beijing As Problems Grow
- Oct. 21, *NYT*: U.S. Sets June Deadline for China to End Abuses
- Nov. 22, *WP*: U.S., China in Test of Strength
- Dec. 21, *WP*: [U.S. Trade Rep] Kantor Warns of Likely Clashes With China, Japan
- Jan. 20, *NYT*: Bentsen Says China Isn't Doing Enough on Rights
- Feb. 2, *WP*: Annual State Department Report Calls Chinese Human Rights Efforts Weak
- Mar. 3, *WSJ*: U.S. Delegations Send Mixed Signals to China Over Renewal of Trade Status
- Mar. 23, *NYT*: U.S. to Try a Conciliatory Tack With China
- Mar. 24, *NYT*: U.S. Signals China It May End Annual Trade-Rights Battles
- Apr. 21, *NYT*: Democrats Push For Compromise On Chinese Trade

The "compromise" mentioned in the latter story "would allow a considerable amount of trade" despite Beijing's institutionalized repression, and "could be critical in helping President Clinton find a face-saving way to salvage his China policy." Don't be surprised if the government's decision, to be announced June 3, completely delinks the issues of trade and human rights. Such a step, which is favored by Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen and Commerce Secretary Ron Brown, would represent a huge victory for Chinese hardliners.

Poor Cuba. Though not perfect, Castro's human rights record compares favorably to China's. Furthermore, the disputes long used by U.S. governments to justify continued conflict—Cuban troops in Africa, Soviet aid, Havana's support for Latin revolutionaries, etc.—are now obsolete.

But while hundreds of firms fight for business with China, only a few shrimpers, coffee companies and tourist agencies push for access to Cuba's far smaller market. Thus, administration strategists see no political payoff and serious political risk in improving relations with Havana—especially as in 1992 Clinton lost Florida by just three percentage points, nearly breaking the Republican Party's long stranglehold on the state's 21 Electoral College votes.

Working hard to ensure continued U.S. hostility towards the Castro government is the Cuban American National Foundation (CANF), which Clinton eagerly courted during his campaign. The CANF is run by Jorge Mas Canosa, a tyrant who rides around Miami in a bullet-proof Mercedes and who has publicly challenged at least one opponent to a duel.

***Counter*punch** recently received a confidential 1993 memo, sent by Mas Canosa to the CANF's directors and trustees, which calls for "confronting...vulgar opportunists and traitors" in the Cuban-American community. Only a few of these "traitors" favor improved relations with Havana; most are guilty only of having publicly opposed Mas Canosa:

- Miami-based unionist Jose Collado is denounced for calling for a Congressional audit of the CANF's "Free Cuba Committee" PAC, which distributes hundreds of thousands of dollars to Republican and Democratic candidates. The memo says the Foundation is working with William Doherty, Executive Director of the American Institute for Free Labor Development, "to give [this] abortion a lesson."
- Elio Muller, a Tampa-based businessman, and Frank Calzon, a hardline rightist at Washington's Freedom House, are identified as the "most rabid defamers of our Chairman." While Muller "needs to learn how politics is carried out in this country," Calzon "requires another kind of lesson."
- Francisco Aruca, owner of the Marazul travel agency and director of a liberal radio program on Cuba, is labelled a "Castroite agent." In the case of Aruca, an escapee from a Cuban prison in the early 1960's, "it is necessary to show...our force in this country. It is time to liquidate this situation that we have had to endure for so many years."

Clinton, who raised $125,000 during a CANF-organized fundraiser in 1992, maintains cordial ties with the Foundation. The president recently endorsed the continued operation of TV Marti, a Mas Canosa fiefdom, and late last year Assistant Secretary of State Alexander Watson gave the administration's first major address on Cuba at the CANF's Miami headquarters. "The Foundation does not set Cuban policy but Clinton is very sensitive to their concerns," says Wayne Smith of the Center for International Policy. He describes the administration's strategy as "the same as that followed by the past nine presidents. It's called 'Waiting for Fidel to Go.'" •

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